

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG PROGRAMS**

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February 11, 2000

**TO: COUNTY ALCOHOL AND DRUG PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS  
LICENSED ALCOHOLISM OR DRUG ABUSE RECOVERY OR  
TREATMENT FACILITIES**

**SUBJECT: GOOD NEIGHBOR GUIDELINES**

Enclosed is a revised copy of the Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs' *Good Neighbor Guidelines*. The edition of the *Guidelines* mailed to you in January 2000, contained a printing error and, therefore, we ask that you destroy your copy.

Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience this oversight has caused you, and thank you in advance for your assistance in this matter. If you have any questions about the *Guidelines*, please contact Lois MacNeil at (916) 323-1806. For additional copies of the *Guidelines*, please contact ADP's Resource Center at (800) 879-2772.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. L. Feinberg', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

DAVID L. FEINBERG  
Manager  
Licensing and Certification Branch

Enclosure

# Good Neighbor Guidelines

Establishing and Maintaining  
Positive Relationships in the Community

A Guidebook for Residential Alcohol and  
Drug Abuse Facilities



## Acknowledgments

*Good Neighbor Guidelines* was developed in response to recommendations from the Care Facilities Task Force which was established by Senate Concurrent Resolution 27 (Senator Quentin L. Kopp, 1997).

The Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP) is very grateful to the California Association of Services for Children and the California Association of Children's Homes for allowing us to paraphrase their "A Guidebook for Group Home Providers." We borrowed much of their fine work and made it appropriate to residential alcohol and drug abuse (AOD) facilities.

This adaptation of *Good Neighbor Guidelines* was written by the California Association of Addiction Recovery Resources under subcontract with the Social Model Recovery Services, through its contract with ADP. The information expressed herein is to assist AOD facilities in establishing and maintaining positive relationships in the community. Questions or comments regarding this document should be directed to:

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## **Table of Contents**

Acknowledgments .....	1
Introduction .....	5
Site Selection .....	7
Before You Move In .....	8
Maintenance .....	9
Law Enforcement .....	10
Complaints .....	11
Communication .....	13
Client Conduct .....	14
Staff Conduct .....	16
Join, Join, and Join .....	17
Community Service .....	18
Samples and Examples	
Neighbor Introduction .....	19
Complaint Protocol .....	20
Wall Hanging .....	21
Code of Ethics .....	22



## Introduction

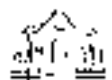


What makes a good neighbor? From personal experiences in our own homes, we all have a pretty clear idea of neighborliness. Good neighbors are people we can rely on to keep an eye on our house when we're away, people we can rely on to give us a hand if we need a little extra help, people we can depend on to help keep the street looking good by keeping their lawns mowed, their yards neat and free of litter, and houses painted. Good neighbors are the folks that we're glad bought the house next door and that we miss when they move away.

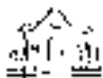
When you open a residential alcohol and drug abuse facility (hereafter referred to as an AOD facility) in a residential community, you become the new neighbor on the block and the neighborhood's expectations about you are the same as they would be about any new neighbor moving in. Because there have been instances where AOD facilities unfortunately have not practiced good neighbor principles, community residents may become suspicious or hostile when they learn that an AOD facility has opened or is about to open in their neighborhood.

As a licensee of an AOD facility, what can you do to turn this attitude around and promote AOD facilities as being good neighbors? This booklet can help. It contains ideas, suggestions and tips, identified by experienced providers and licensing reviewers, for establishing and maintaining positive relationships in the community. It also includes some examples of protocols and communications that you may wish to adapt for use in your own AOD facility.

We hope that you will find the suggestions contained in this booklet helpful and consider incorporating them into your AOD facility. Those of us who are committed to providing neighborhood-



based treatment services for individuals suffering from alcohol or other drug problems must make sure that our residents are committed to being good neighbors, our homes are maintained and our staff conduct themselves in a responsible, positive, professional manner that contributes to the quality of our communities and enhances the AOD facility's efforts to be a good neighbor. In short, we must be good neighbors!

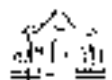


## Site Selection



**A**OD facilities need to:

- Anticipate potential problems.
- Choose a location most appropriate for your services and clientele.
- Review the neighborhood composition of possible sites. Find out who lives there, what schools, businesses, or organizations are located there.
- Anticipate questions and be prepared to answer them. For instance, locating too near a school, playground or liquor store often raises community concerns.
- Contact local zoning or planning boards early in your planning to identify regulations.
- Make it a priority to find space that meets existing zoning requirements.
- Assemble a group of expert and lay persons who support your cause and who would be willing to testify on your behalf should public hearings on siting issues be needed.
- Choose a residential facility which will require minimal renovations. It should have sufficient bedrooms, bathrooms, meeting space and office space; provide a safe environment for staff and residents; meet the Americans With Disabilities Act requirements (especially if you are interested in public funding), and be accessible and appropriate for the target population(s).

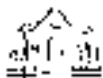


## Before You Move In



Even before you begin services at your AOD facility, there is work to do to reassure your new neighbors that you will be a positive addition to their community. The old maxim “you never get a second chance to make a good first impression” applies here. Do your homework so that you can anticipate and prevent problems before they occur. Consider the following:

- Know your neighborhood and make sure you have a legal right to be there—is the zoning appropriate; do you need a conditional use permit (which may be required of facilities with more than six residents)?
- Make sure that you have secured all the required fire permits, licenses, business licenses, and permits.
- Be sure your home purchase agreement or lease has an escape clause releasing you if you are unable to open the AOD facility.
- Develop a neighbor introduction letter and prepare written materials about your program that can be shared with neighbors; be clear, factual and straightforward. (See “Samples and Examples”—Page 17 for an example of a “Neighbor Introduction.”)
- Have a good-neighbor plan ready in advance and put it into effect as soon as you move in.





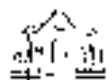
## Maintenance



Maintenance is the essence of “good neighborliness.” Neighbors appreciate neighbors who keep up their property. In your case, good maintenance of the AOD facility may also act to reassure neighbors that your program and the residents served are a valued addition to the neighborhood.

Each AOD facility should be physically maintained in a manner that does credit to the neighborhood. The objective should be to be “the best looking place in the neighborhood.”

- Conduct monthly inspections of the agency’s AOD facility and recognize or reward the staff and clients for their efforts.
- Adhere to community standards for landscaping, painting and décor.
- Keep the exterior free of old furniture, appliances or cars.
- Do not allow residents or visitors to litter.



## Law Enforcement



It is important to develop a relationship with local law enforcement, or with any local response agencies. You need their understanding and support. A “bunker” mentality on your part will mean that law enforcement will only hear a one-sided accounting of any situation. Make their jobs as easy for them as you can. Consider the following:

- Get to know the local police, sheriff and fire department. Invite them to become familiar with the program and facility, and orient them to your mission and goals.
- If possible, recruit a law enforcement officer for your Board of Directors.
- Discuss the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 42, Chapter 1, Part 2, Confidentiality Rules. If possible, work with all law enforcement agencies on a plan for how to cooperate with their requests for information on individuals without violating individual rights to confidentiality.
- Develop a back-up system of support within the AOD facility to minimize your reliance on law enforcement in crisis situations.

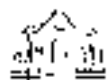


## Complaints



Complainants will find a listener somewhere. If it's not you, it will be local government, local media or a State licensing agency. The involvement of any of these entities can start a series of processes over which you have little direct control. Wouldn't you be in a better position if you had the first opportunity to respond to concerns? Consider the following:

- Make sure the neighbors know who to contact in the AOD facility if they have a complaint or a question, and how to contact that person. Periodically visit neighbors and leave your business card.
- Select a staff member to represent the AOD facility and ask the neighbors to appoint a representative as well. Ask them to be available to one another to discuss any neighborhood issues that may arise.
- Provide mediation crisis intervention training to the person assigned to deal with complaints.
- Develop a written protocol or procedures for staff to follow when a complaint is received. (See "Samples and Examples"—Page 18 for an example of a "Complaint Protocol.")
- Learn to field complaints in a positive way. Even if it appears that the AOD facility is unfairly criticized, the response should be one of acceptance and understanding.



- Respond to any complaints whether legitimate or not. If the complaint does not concern your facility, say so. However, if you are able to remedy the problem, offer to help. If the problem stems from your facility, correct it and assure the complainant that it won't happen again. Then, take appropriate measures so that the problem is not repeated.
- Keep your Board of Directors informed about neighborhood issues; you never know when the support of the Board will be needed to handle a problem in the community. Ideally, you will have representatives of the community serving on your Board of Directors, and this might be the time to call upon their services.



## Communication



AOD facilities often fare very differently in their relationships with neighbors and the community in general. Sometimes this is because of local circumstances beyond the control of the licensee. More often, however, this is because of differences in approach to local communication. Public relations are very important! Consider some of the following approaches:

- Hold periodic open houses; invite the neighbors in now and then. Without violating confidentiality, show off your AOD facility; show your neighbors your successes to help them buy into the need for your AOD facility.
- When someone moves into the neighborhood, have a staff member visit the neighbor. Welcome your neighbor to the neighborhood, acquaint them with the program and give them the name and phone number of the administrator or agency liaison, should concerns arise.
- If you plan to make significant improvements to your property, it is wise to inform your neighbors of the changes before the work is commenced. The more your neighbors know, the less concerns they will have.



## Client Conduct



Regardless of the number of residents served in your AOD facility, it is your responsibility to assure that residents of your program are conducting themselves in such a way as to respect the neighborhood and honor the AOD facility. The following are some suggested rules to ensure your residents are also good neighbors:

- Residents should not loiter in the front yard. Designate outdoor smoking areas that will not interfere with your neighbors. Use the back yard or park for outdoor activities.
- Restrict radios, stereos and television to indoor use and keep the volume of stereos and television at a level that does not disturb the neighbors.
- Residents should dress appropriately and use appropriate language.
- Residents should not engage in any aggressive confrontation with each other or the neighbors.
- Residents should not cut across or walk on neighbors' property.
- If your program does not have "off street" parking, or if multiple vehicles are unsightly, make provisions for residents to leave their vehicles somewhere other than at the house. Use your best judgment, and be consistent



with other homes in the neighborhood, but be aware that one of the most frequent complaints is the number of cars parked at and coming to and from the AOD facility.

- Prohibit any auto maintenance in the driveways/front yards.
- Keep the garage door closed when possible.
- Make a wall hanging or poster and place it where residents and staff can see it daily. (See “Samples and Examples”—Page 19 for an example of a “Wall Hanging.”)

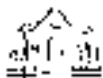


## Staff Conduct



Your staff represents your AOD facility. They are also role models to your residents and community. Consider some of the following rules for staff conduct:

- Staff should observe all rules set for residents. (See “Client Conduct”—Page 12.)
- The agency should have a “Code of Ethics” for all staff and it should be reviewed by staff on a regular basis. Each staff person and volunteer should be required to sign this code of ethics. (See “Samples and Examples”—Page 20 for an example of a “Code of Ethics.”)
- All staff and volunteers shall be aware of the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 42, Chapter 1, Part 2 Confidentiality Rules and shall maintain them at all times.
- Be an overall good neighbor. See the neighbors and let them see you. Build relationships on a personal level as much as your time allows.





## **Join, Join, and Join!**



**B**elonging to local groups and community service organizations is a great way to “walk the walk” as a member of the community. The following are some suggestions for getting involved in the community:

- Participate in the neighborhood watch program.
- Participate in homeowners and apartment associations.
- Encourage staff to get involved in community organizations (e.g., as board members of other community nonprofit organizations, volunteers with police or fire auxiliaries, etc.) so that you will be known and seen as people who are actively involved in the betterment of the community.
- Belong everywhere: Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, etc. You are a member of the community and should act like one.

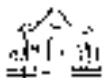


## Community Service



Community service activities are wonderful opportunities to demonstrate your commitment to the neighborhood and your concern for the good citizenship of your residents. Following is a list of community service activities you could undertake, and add to the list those activities that would be appropriate in your neighborhood and community:

- Offer to remove and replace garbage cans for the disabled or elderly on trash day.
- Offer to mow lawns, make home repairs or do yard work for neighbors who are incapacitated or elderly.
- Help clean up the neighborhood in the aftermath of storms, floods, etc.
- Patrol for and remove litter.
- Participate in local community special events.
- Purchase goods and services from local merchants.
- Participate in the adopt-a-highway program.
- Participate in the neighborhood watch program.
- If graffiti appears in the neighborhood, help to remove it.
- Offer to paint street numbers on curbs.



**Samples and Examples**  
**Neighbor**  
**Introduction**

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Easy Does It Recovery Home

Dear Neighbor,

I would like to introduce myself. My name is John/Mary Smith and I am the Director of The Easy Does It Recovery Home. Our organization has been incorporated since 1982 and has been successfully serving recovering alcoholics and drug addicts since that time. We have 12 male residents in this AOD facility.

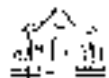
It is our agency's mission to assist these men in their journey to sobriety and recovery by offering them a safe, nurturing environment and skills to function as nondrinking or nonusing citizens in an alcohol- and drug-free environment. Our residential facility provides 24-hour staff supervision, which means there is always someone in charge of the home whom you can reach should you have a question or concern. The State of California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs licenses us as a Residential Nonmedical Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Recovery or Treatment Facility.

It is important that our men live in a community like this since it is in such an environment where they will live when they complete their recovery and treatment services. We take this responsibility very seriously. Our residents learn the importance of being a good neighbor and a positive asset to this community. Please help us to become better neighbors and consider us for involvement or help in any community projects.

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact my staff or me at 555-4444.

Sincerely,

John/Mary Smith  
Director



## **Samples and Examples**

### **Complaint Protocol**

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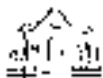
Although there are no requirements in regulation that AOD facilities develop a neighborhood complaint process, it is highly recommended that each AOD facility do so and inform the staff as to the procedure to take should a neighbor complain to the AOD facility. The following is an example:

Easy Does It Recovery Home

To: All Staff  
From: Mary Smith, Director  
Subject: Neighbor Complaints

Should anyone come to the door with a concern or complaint, please follow these instructions:

1. You are allowed to let him/her know we are The Easy Does It Recovery Home, an AOD facility for recovering alcoholics and drug addicts. You are not allowed to give him/her any specific information about our residents.
2. If he/she asks, you may give your name.
3. Ask for his/her name and phone number—if he/she is unwilling to give this information, that is fine—please only ask once.
4. If he/she does give you a name and phone number, tell him/her that Mary Smith, Director will give him/her a call to discuss any concerns he/she may have.
5. Give him/her a copy of the Neighbor Introduction Letter and let him/her know if he/she has any questions, to please call Mary Smith at the number on the letter.
6. Once you have asked for a name and number, and given him/her a copy of the Neighbor Introduction Letter, you are instructed to politely excuse yourself, letting him/her know you need to return to your duties. At no time are you to engage in a discussion or debate about the validity or invalidity of his/her concern or complaint.
7. If you have been through these steps and the person is refusing to leave or is trying to force his/her way into the AOD facility, page me or the designated staff person in charge. As a last resort you should call the local authorities.



## **Samples and Examples**

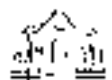
### **Wall Hanging**

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**C**reate a wall hanging that can be displayed in a central location where all staff and residents can see it on a regular basis.

#### Easy Does It Recovery Home

- This is our home.
- Always treat it with respect.
- Remember that you and your actions reflect on our home.
- We are happy to be in this neighborhood.
- Always think of what you can do to make this home and our community better.



## **Samples and Examples Code of Ethics**

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Staff of the Easy Does It Recovery Home is dedicated to the belief in the dignity and worth of all human beings.

Staff will promote and assist in the recovery or treatment of all persons regardless of the ability to pay, without regard to ethnic group identification, religion, age, sex, color or disabilities.

Staff will maintain an appropriate supportive relationship with all persons served, and not become personally, socially, sexually or romantically involved with a resident while the resident is in a professional relationship with the program.

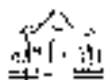
Staff will not commit any act of violence or threats of violence against residents or other staff.

Staff will not become financially involved with residents served.

Staff will strictly adhere to established rules of confidentiality regarding all records, materials and knowledge concerning persons served in accordance with all current government and program regulations.

Staff will respect organizational policies and procedures, along with the rights of other staff members, cooperating with management both on the job and in association with other agencies with which he/she may come in contact in his/her job.

Staff will regularly evaluate their own skills, strengths and limitations, striving always for self-improvement, personal growth and increased knowledge through further education and training.



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